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By Captain Frank A. Cook, U. S. A.

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# THE NATIONAL GUARD MAGAZINE

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## From a Summer With the National Guard

COL. R. L. BULLARD, 26th Inf., U. S. A.

I DID not see it closely, but after all is that the best way to judge of anything? To see too closely means to fasten the attention upon details and lose apprehension of the whole.

And it was at the maneuvers—the right place. A week there will show you more of soldiers than a year at their home stations. Yet, I know, he who sees them only at camp and maneuvers can know nothing of the struggle for life of their organizations at home.

In the beginning this year's maneuvers did not look promising. First, it had been a bad year for the National Guard in Congress. Second, decentralization, we had heard, was to be the keynote, and the War Department had decentralized on the Division Commander, who had decentralized on the Department Commander, who, in some cases, had decentralized on the camp commander, who had decentralized on the regimental commanders, who—hadn't expected it, yet who, whether Regular or National Guardsman, with characteristic American resourcefulness, managed to come up with something that saved failure. The War Department's "decentralization" did not prove bad. It resulted (perhaps outside of official calculation) in something suited to or at least not beyond the guardsmen's state of instruction, small, not grand maneuvers. Yet, a program of maneuvers "cut and dried" to the last detail of the last exercise is best. Commanders to a man may and usually do object. They are wrong. They forget the purpose. Maneuvers are intended to test and practice troops in military operations of a certain kind. If everything down to the last detail be not exacted of the actors, the lesson had in mind by those who prepared the exercise will be lost, and lessons, be it remembered, are what we are after.

The National Guardsman is always a binomial, a citizen-soldier. He is never at any time except in war completely or exclusively one term or the other of his expression. Military considerations alone can, therefore, never except in war govern where he enters. This principle runs through all that concerns him. Some of us are likely to forget it.

For camps our habit is one of elaborate preparation. This is right. It can always be done when war comes—if we have carefully selected our enemy! Nor would the absence, under like conditions, of hospital arrangements and field transportation for some days after beginning make any serious difference. But the habit of elaborate preparation and the provision of maneuver camps with everything down to iceboxes and electric lights is upon us. It may be due to our day or to the demand of the citizen in the guardsman. The states, at any rate, have been doing it and the guard everywhere have come to expect no less. We are rich but if all war's operations should be so elaborate and so costly! To the implication to be drawn from this, I know it will be replied, "But you've got to do it or die of disease." I cannot answer except to say that some while ago soldiers, effective soldiers, took the field without this cost and

iards made the wonderful expeditions of Cortez, De Soto, Coronado, Alvarado and Pizarro.

But of maneuver work the lack of a program prearranged in detail may not, as I have said, mean failure; but it means waste of time. I saw two kinds. Of the unprepared kind a live guard colonel said to me, "My regiment is doing but half work." Yet, in the effort to avoid waste of time, there is such a thing as going too fast. A thing of the prime importance in training soldiers is that they early learn how to make and keep a good camp. Though they learn all the drill and tactics ever conceived and leave out this, they are never good soldiers. Hurry them too much in their maneuver camps, especially in the beginning, and the National Guard never learn it.

The guard may grow old; the guardsman is ever new. He is an annual flower, as it were. If not, as time proceeds, certain of his ways would disappear—night prowling, "rookie" greenness, spirits and enthusiasm, all-night talk and noises, after-taps celebrations and before-reveille yells and disturbances. "De white folks was sho havin' dey fun las' night. De automobiles was a-runnin' all night long." The average organization is ever new, ever changing its personnel. Each maneuver sees a new bunch under the old name. With them there can be no such thing as learning and quitting, graduating in the soldier's business. The guardsman enlists, learns a little, then passes out, another, all unlearned, taking his place to be passed through the same course of enlistment, a little service and discharge. The guard life is a brief circle. He who expects, then, to see it pass above a certain point in instruction, must always be mistaken. The guardsman's opportunity is too limited; his life too short. One thinks of the lines of the Persian poet:

"Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee  
There was—and then no more of Thee and Me."

From animal spirits and love of fun and excitement, the guardsman North, South, East and West, is a forager. For the "damage to crops," "broken fences" and "trampled pastures" of the provost marshal, read water-melons stolen, chicken roost robbed and orchard stripped. "They milked most of my cows last night." They got all the chickens that roosted in the old barn. "And, would you believe it? They carried off two of my bee-gums, bees, honey and all." Young men on a frolic; the ebullition of life. Be as alive as they; put them in charge of these things as a guard; they will keep them.

Is he manageable? To those who know how to command him, yes. I give you some notes of the time:

"Their animal spirits have caused the worst camp I ever saw to be accepted with enthusiasm."

"Today I saw many young fellows that had fallen out after a rush and a hard fight in the muggy weather. Some had evidently become disgruntled and didn't care a continental whether they went further or not, were hot and mad and disgusted. I had no diffi-

ting them all again on their feet and in their places. The incident but renewed old experiences and enthusiasms with me; they brought back a long past conviction that, notwithstanding all their too apparent faults and defects, these troops can be made to do anything. I for one want a chance to command them anywhere, either in war or peace. I say that where I have had experience with them, I have never failed to get them to do whatever I wished them to do. To have seen long columns of them straggling, wandering, loose and irresponsible, as I today saw them after a hot run and fight, and to see them nevertheless respond to a man on a call to duty by me, a stranger, made me say to an officer who spoke in condemnation of them, "Dear sir, I would like to have a brigade of them in war."

They come with the spirit of the game. The kicking in one camp for more room was but inexperience, the habit of the first term, citizen, in the binomial, citizen-soldier. I wonder what they would have thought had they been called upon to work upon the little spaces on which Federal and Confederate armies moved, camped and fought in deadly struggle from Wilderness to Cold Harbor?

The officers? Capacity enough; in theory, not wanting; in practice of command, lacking. Here in this last we put our finger on the weak point of the guard. They know not how, have not practice enough in command to learn how, to secure action on their orders. From my notebook again:

"Today the chief surgeon found it impossible to secure police in any decent way of the latrines of one regiment. The colonel gladly gave the orders to correct the wrong conditions and then didn't know how to have his orders executed."

"I can call spirits from the vasty deep," says Glendower. "Why, so can I, so can any man, but will they obey when you do call them," replies Hotspur. The management and command of a National Guard organization is a matter peculiarly of leadership, tact, judgment and knowledge of men. This requires in the officer higher qualities than does a discipline of force, of law and authority alone. It takes a better man to make a competent National Guard officer than it does to make a competent regular one. And here, when we study the National Guard, we find a sign of promise. It is this: "There are many officers today in the National Guard who solely upon their own personality are able to maintain good organizations. What may we not expect of such officers when war adds to them the power of a real authority? Anything."

Between Northern and Southern guardsmen—but my note made at the time best convey the impression that I brought from them. A first one says: "The most notable differences are in the amounts of money that they are getting. That shows in the North in older and more developed men, in better clothes, better shoes, better transportation. The shoes with infantry make the most important difference." A letter: "The difference between quiet and enthusiasm, silence and hurrah. The Southern men are cheering everything they like, shouting, clapping and shooting blank cartridges; the Northern—nothing of the sort." A last: "Northern

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### Editor and General Manager

LEUT. COL. EDWARD T. MILLER, Quartermaster Department, Columbus, Ohio.

Associate Editors—Colonel Edwin B. Baker of Mississippi; Major A. L. Hitchens of Kansas; Brigadier General W. E. Finzer of Oregon; General C. H. Englesby of South Dakota; Major R. A. Richards of Wisconsin; Captain C. M. Dillon of Delaware; Major Edward D. Ellis of Michigan.

mail Arms Department—Major M. J. Phillips, Editor. Home address, Owosso, Mich.

Washington Correspondent—Washington, D. C. W. England Bureau—No. 6 Dearborn St., Salem

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## CONTENTS FOR APRIL

FROM A SUMMER WITH THE NATIONAL GUARD, by Col. R. L. Bullard, 26th Inf., U. S. A.	99
NATIONAL GUARD ORGANIZATIONS TO TAKE ANTI-TYPHOID	101
RECRUITING NOT THE BIGGEST PROBLEM OF NATIONAL GUARD COMPANIES, by Lieut. Sinke, 2nd Mich. Inf.	102
HOW INCREASE DRILL ATTENDANCE AND EFFICIENCY IN RIFLE PRACTICE, by H. T. Egle, 1st Sergt., Co. G, 18th Pa. Inf.	103
ARMY LIFE IN ALASKA, by 2nd Lieut. Gerald Ellis Cronin, 9th U. S. Inf.	104
THE INAUGURATION PARADE	104
WHAT IS THE NATIONAL GUARD?	105
AEROPLANES IN WARFARE	105
CURRENT EVENTS AND COMMENT	106
COMMUNICATIONS	108
TALKS BY THE "OLD MAN"	109
THE AMMUNITION COLUMN	112
PROMOTION OF RIFLE PRACTICE, by Maj. M. J. Phillips	113
WHAT THE STATES ARE DOING	114